

Proof of Full COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Directive (SHA-02-009)

Questions and Answers

1. Why was it important for the SHA to make this policy directive now?

The SHA maintains a commitment to safety, including safety of its employees, physicians, patients, families and partners. The Delta variant is dominant in the province causing a serious rise in disease burden. There is significant evidence that unvaccinated individuals are contributing to exposures (causing transmission) including in healthcare settings. Vaccination is a way to make the workplace as safe as possible in this situation.

There have been multiple scenarios recently where unvaccinated team members have introduced COVID-19 infection into the settings we serve across the SHA, resulting in COVID-19 exposures and infections.

Despite efforts to make vaccination as easy as possible, **1 in 5 healthcare workers** are not vaccinated. Unvaccinated team members put themselves, patients, and the health system at very high risk. Given the vulnerability of the people we serve, directly and indirectly, we need to ensure that nearly everyone is vaccinated.

Being fully vaccinated has been proven to reduce the likelihood of infection¹, and thus

- the likelihood of transmitting to others;
- falling ill from the infection, and notably
- from becoming severely ill or dying from the infection.

Vaccination is most effective for everyone in a community when a large number of people are vaccinated, also known as "herd immunity", and the same is true for our SHA community.

2. Which vaccine(s) are acceptable¹?

Saskatchewan and the SHA accept vaccines that are approved by Health Canada (Pfizer-BioNTech [Comirnaty®], Moderna [Spikevax®], AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD, or Johnson & Johnson [Janssen]).

Vaccines that are non-Health Canada approved are also acceptable, but an additional dose of a Health Canada approved mRNA vaccine may be required to ensure optimal protection.

3. What happens if I do not provide proof of vaccination?

Everyone who does not provide proof of full COVID-19 vaccination is required to participate in the SHA COVID-19 monitored testing program at their own cost.

4. What is the definition of being fully vaccinated?

Team members are considered fully vaccinated **two weeks after** receiving:

- a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in a two-dose series (mixed series are acceptable); or
- a single dose of an approved one-dose COVID-19 vaccine.

If you are unvaccinated:

- Get vaccinated with a Health Canada-approved vaccine.

If you have one dose of a Health Canada-approved two-dose vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna or AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD):

- Get your second dose of a Health Canada-approved vaccine.

If you have received one dose of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine:

- No further vaccination required.

If you have received two doses of a Health Canada-approved vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna or AstraZeneca):

- No further vaccination required.

If you received non-Health Canada approved vaccines, please contact OH&S to have your vaccine series assessed to establish if you need further vaccination.

5. If I had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

Yes, team members who have tested positive for COVID-19 still need to be fully vaccinated. You can get your vaccine right after you have completed your self-isolation.

6. How do I provide proof of my vaccination status?

The SHA is working through the details of how this information will be collected and managed. Details will be shared once the process is finalized.

7. What if I decide to get vaccinated once I'm in the monitored testing program?

Once you provide proof of full COVID-19 vaccination you can exit the program.

8. Why isn't masking enough?

Before vaccines were available, continuous masking was the best option to protect team members and patients. Thankfully, masking makes a significant impact on COVID-19 transmission, but masking is also vulnerable to human error and mishaps. This is why we need to use all available measures to protect against harm.

The immunity from your vaccine is always on, while your mask might not be, and together they give you the best protection against COVID-19 now available.

9. Do I still need to wear PPE if I'm fully vaccinated or have had a negative test?

Yes. Continue to follow the most current SHA Infection Prevention and Control requirements for appropriate PPE use in all SHA facilities, including for community care.

10. Why isn't rapid antigen testing equal to vaccination to protect team members and patients?

Vaccination protects individuals better than rapid antigen testing, leading to greater safety for patients and other SHA team members.

Testing continues to be crucial part of the approach, but fundamentally it focuses downstream in the disease process and works to capture infection when present and detectable so that no further transmission can occur. It is important to recognize that asymptomatic persons who test positive were **likely transmitting virus to others in the 48 hours prior to the test result**. This is in contrast to vaccination which has the ability to prevent the infection from occurring.

Antigen tests have the most value in situations where people are testing repeatedly on a routine basis, and the more frequent that repetition the more valuable the test becomes.

11. Science-backed key messages:

- 60% of the total population is considered fully vaccinated, but this is much less than the amount needed to allow us to live with COVID-19.
- All non-pharmaceutical public health measures (masking, physical distancing) are only voluntary at this time, and compliance with these measures is decreasing.
- COVID-19 vaccines are effective for:
 - o Preventing infection with COVID-19;
 - o Decreasing the severity of illness when illness occurs; and
 - o Decreasing forward transmission of the virus to others.
- COVID-19 illness is much more serious than influenza, and COVID vaccines are significantly more effective at preventing illness than influenza vaccines are at preventing flu.
- Safety of COVID-19 vaccines is well established (in the medium term).
- Serial testing (rapid antigen testing) **is not equal in protection** compared to vaccination.
 - o Asymptomatic individuals who test positive with an antigen test were likely transmitting virus to others in the 48 hours prior to the test result.

12. What if I have questions about COVID-19 vaccines?

You can find information you can trust on the Government of Saskatchewan [COVID-19 vaccine website](#), from SHA Occupational Health staff, from Public Health, or from your Family Physician.

13. Why do non front-line staff need to provide proof of vaccination?

All team members, including office staff, should be protected against COVID-19 as much as possible. Being vaccinated means you are less likely to catch the virus and pass it onto others in your workplace, or even to others in your workplace who then pass it onto those we serve. It helps us keep the workplace as safe as possible for everyone.

14. What if I work from home?

Team members working from home could be required to attend an SHA facility at any time. Since circumstances could be of an urgent nature, team members need to be ready to respond. This means providing proof of full COVID-19 vaccination.

15. I have questions about the safety of the vaccines. Where can I get more information?

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. They have been fully tested, evaluated and reviewed. A vaccine is only approved by Health Canada if it is safe, it works, it meets manufacturing standards, and the benefits outweigh any risks.

As of September 16, 2021 Health Canada authorized the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty® and Moderna Spikevax® COVID-19 vaccines under the [Food and Drug Regulations](#).

Both vaccines were previously authorized for use in Canada under the *Interim Order*, which was a temporary regulatory tool. The September 16, 2021 authorizations under the *Food and Drug Regulations* represents full approval and will allow Canadians to have continued access to these vaccines.

For more information go to [COVID-19 Vaccine Information | COVID-19 Vaccine | Government of Saskatchewan](#)

16. How will my personal health information related to COVID-19 vaccination be used?

Proof of vaccination, and any other required personal health information, will be protected as per the SHA [Privacy and Confidentiality](#) Policy.

17. Does this policy directive apply to members of the public coming to SHA facilities?

No. This policy directive does not apply to the public. Members of the public attending SHA facilities will still go through screening and are expected to follow the current SHA requirements for mask use.

18. Who is included in the general term “team members?”

In the context of SHA policy, ‘the team’ represents all individuals working, volunteering, or learning within the SHA. This could include staff, practitioner staff, contracted individuals, Patient Family Partners, Knowledge Keepers, volunteers and learners.

The specific team member groups that a policy applies to are listed in the policy header. After that, any time the term “team members” is used in that policy it means all the people in the specific groups the policy applies to.

If a policy statement applies only to certain groups they will be named (such as “Staff”).

References

1. Fowlkes A, Gaglani M, Groover K, et al. Effectiveness of COVID-19 Vaccines in Preventing SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Frontline Workers Before and During B.1.617.2 (Delta) Variant Predominance — Eight U.S. Locations, December 2020–August 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub*: 24 August 2021. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7034e4>
2. Government of Canada (2021). [COVID-19: Effectiveness and benefits of vaccination - Becoming fully vaccinated.](#)
3. Government of Canada (2021). [COVID-19: Recommendations for those vaccinated with vaccines not authorized by Health Canada for those staying in Canada to live, work or study - Canada.ca](#)